

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR OPERATING AN
ELECTROCHEMICAL FUEL CELL**

Abstract

5 An operating method increases fuel cell
life or durability, particularly that of a
solid polymer electrolyte fuel cell. The fuel
cell has a mean life expectancy that may be
empirically determined. The method comprises
the step of reversing the direction of flow of
at least one of the fluids supplied to the fuel
cell (for example, the fuel and/or oxidant
reactants) through its corresponding flow field
10 after a time period of operation of the fuel
cell. The time period is less than the mean
life expectancy of the cell and has a value
that is a substantial part of the mean life
expectancy. The flow may be reversed once or
15 several times over the life of the fuel cell.
An improved apparatus carries out the method.